DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 170 944 EA 011 727

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TITLE Strike Communications: Before, During and After -- Keys to Success.
INSTITUTION Association of California School Administrators.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 54p.
AVAILABLE FROM Association of California School Administrators, 1575 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, California 94010 ($5.00)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; *Communication (Thought Transfer); Elementary Secondary Education; Employer Employee Relationship; Mass Media; Parent School Relationship; Planning; *Publicize; *Public Relations; School Community Relationship; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Strikes

ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to help educational administrators implement a sound public relations program during a school strike. Early preparation and professionalism are stressed as keys to success. Communications with employees, news media representatives, parents, and community residents are discussed. Communication techniques that are explained and suggested include taped phone messages, news releases, letters, question and answer sheets, and newspaper ads. The bulk of the report is made up of samples of each type of communication discussed. (JM)

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STRIKE

COMMUNICATIONS: BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

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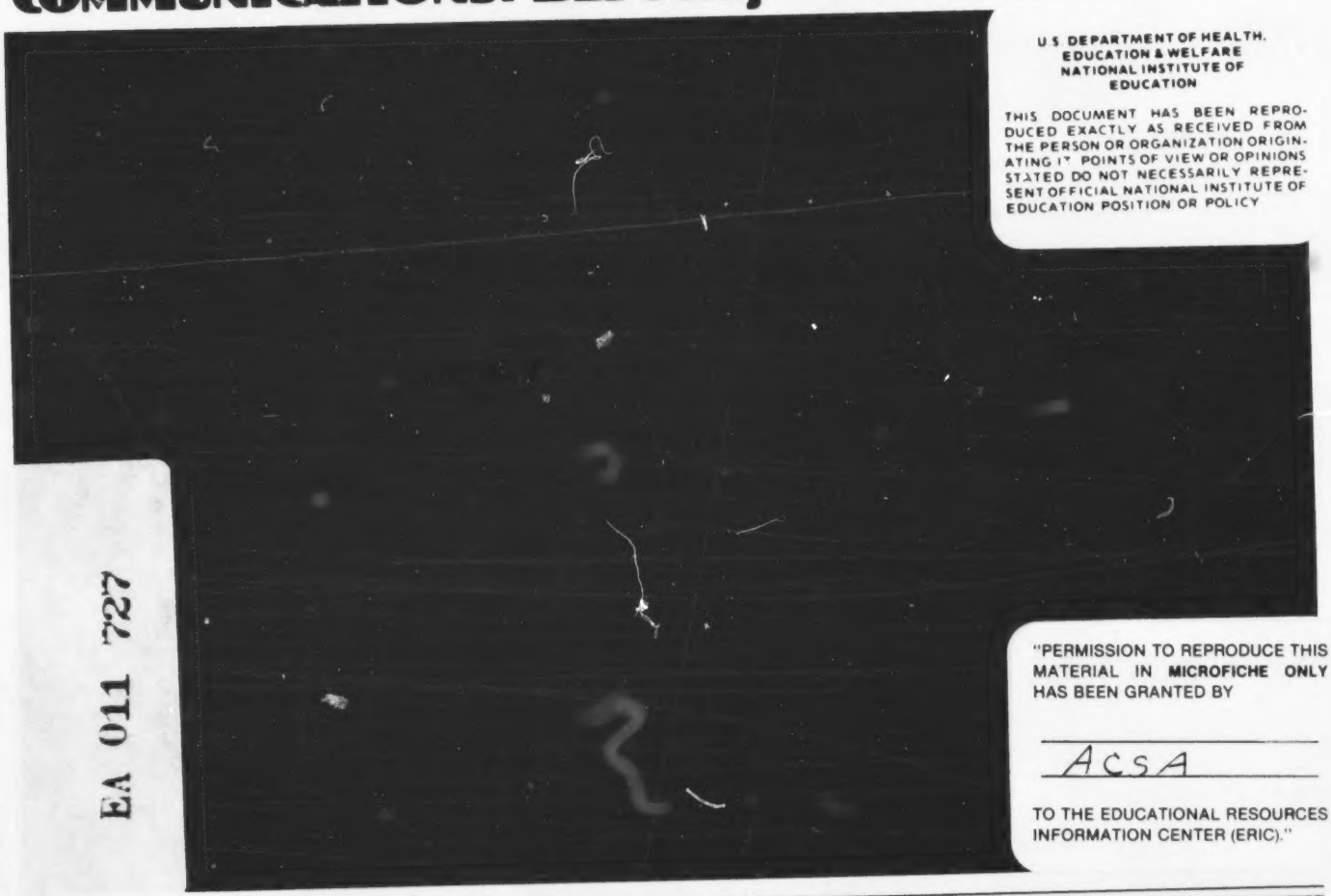

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KEYS TO SUCCESS

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STRIKE COMMUNICATIONS: BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER -- KEYS TO SUCCESS

By Lew Armistead
ACSA Public Information Executive

Author's Note

With the Rodda Act bringing collective bargaining to California and new developments over the recent few years in public employee strikes, some previous thoughts on strike communications need to be re-examined. This document is an update of the communications section in the ACSA Strike Manual.

Sincere appreciation is expressed to members of the ACSA ad hoc school public relations committee for their advice on this publication: Gayle Wayne, communications consultant, Ocean View Elementary School District; Bill Rogers, director of public information, San Juan Unified and Rod Cryer, administrative assistant, Franklin-McKinley Elementary School District.

One of the most critical areas in dealing with a school strike is your communications program -- both externally and internally.

"Sometimes over 80% of a crisis or a strike is P.R." Thus reads "Call to Action," a how-to manual on media communications distributed by CTA. The purpose of any strike is to create pressure on the governing board and school administration. That's done by winning public opinion. The union will strive to sell its viewpoint to the community, then call upon the public to telephone board members night and day, to picket them, write letters about them to the media, and much more. Neglected public relations will help the union win support for its views and, thereby, place monumental pressure on the district. There are few guarantees in a public employee strike, but one is that the union will have a sophisticated public relations campaign. The more pressure board members receive from the community to settle the strike, the more difficult it becomes to hold to their position and principles.

The strike will ultimately be ended at the bargaining table. Without a doubt, public opinion will help determine the direction the board gives its negotiators. Public opinion and pressure can be for or against the district's position -- it is up to you.

This material is designed to provide specific examples of communication tools during the negotiations process and a strike. But remember they are only suggestions. Not all of these concepts are appropriate for all school districts. Each district must evaluate its own situation -- its human resources, its needs, etc. Evaluate whether these suggestions will meet the needs in your district. All may, or only some may. Also remember that appropriate ACSA staff members are always available to provide advice and planning to any school district.

There are two general guidelines, however, which apply to all school districts:

1. Prepare early.

2. Be professional.

Early Preparation

One of the keys to successful communications during a crisis is having a well-structured program. That can only be done before the crisis hits. A district needs to know the phone numbers of the radio stations which cover its area, when newspaper deadlines are, the names of the opinion leaders in the community; plus much, much more. It's much easier to lay this groundwork a month before the strike hits than during the first morning of the strike. The

more preparation time you allow, the easier the job will be.

Of course, the district which has an on-going public relations program will have an easier time. Much of the groundwork will have already been done.

If your district doesn't have a structured public relations effort going now, start now. Find out who the media representatives are in the community. Set up some ways to communicate with the public. Establish channels to answer the public's questions. (See Preparation Checklist on page 16.)

Professionalism

The lack of professionalism during a strike will be most apparent and damaging in a district's communications efforts. Under strike conditions, it's easy to react emotionally. But that can be costly. Remember that sooner or later the strike will end. Management then has the heavy responsibility of pulling everything back together. An emotional, unprofessional letter to employees, or an emotional, unprofessional tirade in front of the television cameras could haunt a district for years afterwards. Both will certainly make the job of bringing people back together after the strike much more difficult.

Remember also that more people will be listening during a crisis. A district will receive more attention from the media, and more members of the community will take the initiative to ask questions. A professional manner of communicating and reacting to questions and charges show people that highly professional individuals are in charge of their youngster's education. An emotional presentation will lead to a lack of confidence in public school leadership. In some districts that have been struck and reacted unprofessionally in front of the public, there has been a large decrease in student enrollment and a commensurate increase in enrollment in nearby private schools.

Understanding those two keys, let's look at some specific tasks before the strike hits.

Communicating with Employees

Early communications with employees can be especially important. In fact they may avert a strike. The leaders of the union will be reporting their side as soon as budget hearings and negotiations begin, if not before. They are not going to write that the board and the superintendent are the best things to hit the district since apple pie. If a district does not factually report

its side, the union's viewpoint will easily gain acceptance. This does not mean that every syllable uttered over the negotiating table should be publicized. But reports that meetings are being held and items on which agreement have been reached are appropriate. Of course, check with the negotiator on communication plans so his/her strategy at the table is not damaged. Also determine what might constitute an unfair labor practice under the law.

Some communications tools to consider are extending a personal invitation to some respected teachers to attend the board's budget hearings or holding a special meeting with them. Consider a special newsletter reporting results of negotiations in conjunction with your negotiator. (Get it out immediately after the session, beat the union to the punch. But be factual and straightforward.) One of the most frequent charges is that the "board will not negotiate with us." Destroy the charge by reporting how many sessions have been held, how long they were, and how many are scheduled for the future.

As a strike appears imminent, consider sending a letter to all employees detailing the budgetary situation and explaining the rationale why the board's offer is the best it can make. This letter may be the most important aspect of a district's strike communications effort even though it comes before the strike. If employees understand that the board is being fair with them and trying to give them what money and benefits it can afford, they are much less likely to strike. If they only hear the union's interpretations of the offer, they are much more likely to strike.

Again, don't communicate every word during negotiations, but consider informing the employees of major facts. A district which has built a credible communications system with employees before a crisis will be much more likely to be believed during a crisis.

Working with the News Media

As negotiations get more heated, more and more reporters will contact the district. If struck, the district will meet reporters never seen before. Be prepared.

One of the first things to do is get a list of all the newspapers and radio and television stations in the area. Make sure the list has been updated very recently. Reporters and editors change. Check the accuracy of the list. That does not mean just the local weekly newspaper. Any radio or television station which is heard in the community or nearby communities is likely to cover a strike. Any daily newspaper read in the district will also seek information. The media list should include phone numbers, addresses,

deadlines and the name of a person to contact.

Many of the reporters have never been in the district. Thus, they have little knowledge about it. Consider preparing a media packet of basic facts. Not only will that promote accurate coverage, but the media will appreciate the cooperation. They have a job to do, too. Such a packet might include a one-page fact sheet, including enrollment, number of schools, budget highlights, name of the district spokesperson, and number of employees. You might want to expand information on the budget to include how much is spent on salaries, benefits, supplies, instructional programs, etc. Consider a page summarizing what has been offered and what the union demands. Consider a summary of how district employees' salaries and benefits compare with others in your region and what increases they have received in recent years. A short history of the negotiations showing when meetings started, how many times meetings have been held, and what has been agreed upon would be good. Any background material such as strike-related materials already written for other purposes can be included. This packet could be handed to each media representative when he/she first arrives. Or it could be mailed to those who cover the strike through phone calls.

A district must decide how it will communicate with the media. They will have questions; how will you provide answers? Will it be during a daily news conference?* Is it necessary to have two news conferences each day? Will your district respond to phone calls and interview requests individually? All management personnel will be busy. But the media will also be busy, meeting deadlines. It's critical that someone is always available to the media. If a management representative is not available to answer the media's questions when they are asked, the reporter will go to the union.

There are some advantages and disadvantages to scheduling news conferences. One advantage is your time. Since management personnel will be very busy, it might be wise to meet with as many reporters at one time as possible. However, even if a news conference is held, the media will ask additional questions throughout the day. It's important that management representatives maintain their availability throughout the day. But a conference could solve some time problems of a small district with a limited number of management personnel. Consider having an initial conference the first day of the strike to assure that the media hears your side.

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*News conference is a good term as it identifies what will be provided to the media -- news. Also, press is perceived as a term referring to newspapers, but not radio and television.

One potential disadvantage is that the media will be able to fire questions at whoever speaks for the district. If the spokesperson can not handle the questions gracefully while answering them accurately, it would be best not to get into this situation. Also if you schedule a news conference, you must be able to assure that information such as attendance figures are available at the time of the conference. Don't hold a conference at a time when appropriate facts are not yet available.

A news conference might be good in your district. But weigh the advantages and disadvantages. And don't do it in hopes of "keeping the media out of your hair." A management representative must still be available to answer the media's questions throughout the day.

In dealing with the media during a strike, a district should employ the same relationships as during day-to-day operation. Always tell the truth. Don't say that education is normal when it isn't. Don't say that all classes are covered when they aren't. If you lie or distort the truth, you will get caught. That destroys your credibility, both with the media and the public. Then, they will turn to the union for this information. Try to cooperate with the media and provide information as quickly as possible. They have a job to do, also, and will appreciate your cooperation.

If there are some newspapers or radio or television stations that cover the district on a regular basis, consider meeting with representatives from that media before the strike. Explain the background. Give them personal attention. The union will. That meeting might involve the reporter who normally covers the district and the editor. Help them understand the collective bargaining process and how it specifically effects your district.

Now a word about the "no comment" agreement. It generally doesn't work. Experience has shown that unions are the first to break those agreements. They may talk with all their members via telephone trees. Meanwhile the district could be prohibited from sending a letter to employees because of this "no comment" agreement. It can be very risky.

The question will arise as to whether the media can take photographs in classrooms. This is another item a district should weigh carefully. Anytime a camera enters most classrooms, even during normal times, it tends to have a disruptive effect on students. During a strike you certainly don't want to show disruption. On the other hand, the media is likely to be uptight about a decision that keeps them out of the classrooms. From the sidewalk they can take photos of the pickets and students outside of the classroom.

We have all seen photos of a classroom during a strike which shows the substitute teaching three students. If you decide to allow the media into the classrooms, talk to them about their responsibility to report objectively -- if there are some classrooms with few students and some with numerous students, it might be fair to show both.

If you decide not to allow them in the classrooms, a justification is that the district's prime concern is continuing to provide a good educational program and cameras would be disruptive to that.

One alternative might be not allowing them into classrooms during the first or second day while you may still be strengthening your school program, and, instead, allowing them to take photos of your communication center. Then, when the school program is functioning well, allow them to enter the schools. It would be super if you could designate which schools the media could enter, but placing a one-school limitation on them could again create alienation. An alternative could be developing a list of five schools and letting the media select from those. Make sure those schools are near the district office if the reporter leaves from there. You don't want to make the media drive all over the city. Also be sure principals are informed that the media is coming.

While it is unlikely that school principals will play a large role in communicating with the media during a strike, they are likely to be contacted by reporters. There are two approaches to principals dealing with the media. Under both, the principal should never discuss what is happening at the table, why the board has taken it's position, or why teachers are striking. Principals may not have received updated information on negotiations or the board's position. Having them report out-dated information could only confuse the media.

Two alternatives should be considered. The first is that principals will not comment to the media but direct all questions to the spokesperson at the district office. Or principals could comment only on what has happened at their specific school, i.e., substitutes are in the classrooms, how many students are attending (but make sure those figures jive with what the district office will report), learning is going on.

The first option will save principals time, and they are going to be very busy. A principal simply may not have the time to meet with reporters at seven different times of the day and still run a school during a strike. But if a principal flat out refuses to speak to the media, reporters could feel he or she is attempting to hide something. If you decide that principals will not speak to reporters, it's imperative that the

media's needs are met at the district office. It's extremely important that attendance and incidents are reported as quickly as possible to the district office.

If you decide that principals will be allowed to report what is happening at their schools directly to the media. be sure they understand what they should and shouldn't say. A training session with the communications coordinator would be appropriate.

Who Should Handle Communications?

It's important that one person supervises all communications to assure that everyone is sending the same message. This goes for messages to employees, parents and the media. There's nothing that will make a district look more foolish than one administrator saying a school is operating at peak efficiency and another saying it is ready to be shut down. That's why one person reviews all communications. But it doesn't mean that the person in charge of communications is the one who appears before the television cameras or speaks to the PTA. Now, who should that person be? Be flexible.

A district must decide whether one person will actually be the only person to speak or whether different individuals will speak at different times. For instance, a large district might designate its school public relations professional as the spokesperson for providing daily information on operation of the schools, the superintendent or chief negotiator as the spokesperson on the district's commitment to reach a quick settlement and the district's financial condition, and the board president on the reasons why the board can not offer more than it already has. A small district with fewer management personnel might have one person filling all these roles.

If a district has a public relations administrator, consider placing that person in charge of overall communications. There are three main reasons for that:

1. He or she has the communications skills.

2. He or she is already working with the media and should have some credibility.

3. He or she shouldn't have other major responsibilities during the strike.

The last should be carefully considered. Running a communications program during a strike is more than a fulltime job. Don't assign that task to someone who will be negotiating,

responsible for staffing or the many other major tasks during a strike. When the news media is pressed with a deadline and want to hear the district's viewpoint, someone better be ready and willing to speak. If the media are told that the spokesperson is negotiating or that the superintendent is the only one who can answer and can't be interrupted, the district's message is not going to be told. The media's deadline will not wait for your convenience. There's no doubt the union will have a spokesperson ready for the media. Additionally, the media will think a district is uncooperative and may be less likely to cooperate with that district when it wants help.

If there is no public relations professional on the district staff, carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of who will run the communications program. Also think about the roles these individuals could play if you have a p.r. professional.

A Board Member -- If board members work, they can't be at the district office throughout the day to handle these responsibilities. As a generalization, board members may take the union's attacks more personally, and it is easier for them to react emotionally. But a longtime board member could have a great deal of credibility and that is an admirable characteristic for a spokesperson. Board members also are the elected representatives of the community and have the final say on what is offered employees.

A Superintendent -- Superintendents tend to be very busy people during strikes. In a large or medium-sized district, they will likely not have the time to serve as spokesperson. They also have to pull the district back together when it is over, and things said as strike spokesperson could hamper that. But they, also, might have considerable credibility. And they are the chief administrators. The community often expects to hear from them.

The Negotiator -- This person certainly has the greatest knowledge about what's going on at the table. But he/she has another job during this crisis and likely will not have the time to be spokesperson. Your negotiator could, however, issue occasional statements on the progress at the table. It's imperative that whoever is speaking for the district coordinates any statements about actual negotiations with the chief negotiator. Don't destroy the negotiator's strategy in a news conference.

There's no proven answer to the question of who will speak for the district. Some districts have successfully had one individual act as spokesperson for everything. Other districts have used two or three individuals with specific areas in which they will speak. Evaluate your personnel and some of the

considerations outlined here.

Small districts are likely to need some help in the total communications effort. Their best bet is looking for someone who is trained in communications and hopefully has some experience during strikes. Some county offices will "loan" a communications expert. Look to your professional associations, such as ACSA, for the help they can provide. Also look at the possibility of hiring a consultant. The consultant can do the considerable amount of writing that will be required and provide professional advice on the impact decisions may have on public opinion. But never have "an outsider" serve as your spokesperson in front of the media.

Communicating by Actions

Just as during the normal school year, some of the most credible communications will be by actions. A student's report home to parents will be much more believable than a news release. The best way to indicate to parents an educational program is continuing is to provide learning opportunities for the students.

Think about how you can indicate that education is going on by actions. Certainly substitute teachers should be ready on the first day of a strike. If students normally receive homework, make sure they continue to do so during a strike. If they normally are quizzed every week, make sure quizzes continue.

What Will Everyone Want to Know

Once the strike begins there are certain questions to expect from the media, students, parents, and employees. By being prepared with the answers to these questions, a district will show that it has control of the situation.

Are the schools open?

How many students are attending classes? How does that compare with normal attendance?* How does today's attendance compare with previous days' attendance during the strike?

How many members of the regular staff are working? What percentage of the staff is working? How does that compare to the other days of the strike?

How many substitutes are in the classrooms? Are all classes covered? What are you paying subs? (Always compare substitute pay to the average daily salary for district teachers. That can justify the higher compensation during this crisis situation.) Are the students really being taught?

* Make comparisons to normal attendance, not enrollment.

Have there been any "unusual incidents" that effect the operation of the school? Before reporting them, consider whether they really have an effect on the schools. For example, if a picket lets the air out of the principal's tires, that really doesn't effect the educational program. Will it really serve any purpose to report that to the media? However, if something is done which effects the learning opportunities in a classroom, the community deserves to know of it.

What progress has been made in negotiations? Were negotiations held since yesterday? Are negotiations being held again? Has mediation been considered? What were the latest offers? Have new agreements been reached?

Make sure the answers to these questions are known before the morning news conference if you decide to have conferences. (How to obtain those answers will be discussed under the section on a communications center.)

Students and parents will be asking many of the same questions. Primarily they want to know if school will continue to be open.

Will school be open? Will all services (transportation, food) be offered? Will work completed during the strike be counted? Will learning really occur? Will it be safe for children to attend school?

Employees will want to know about the negotiations and whether the board intends to treat them fairly. Striking employees will also be interested in what will happen when they return and should be reminded that they are losing salary while they are away from work.

These are some general considerations. Now, let's use some specific communication devices.

Taped Phone Messages

One of the most successful communication tools is the taped message which people may hear by simply dialing a phone number. A district that does not already have such a phone system, should install one before the strike hits. It's much easier to assure that phone company representatives will get the job done quickly if they do not have to cross picket lines. Encourage people to call this phone system 24 hours a day for up-to-date, accurate information. This vehicle is especially useful to insure that parents and students know the current status of the operation of schools. You can change the message as frequently as you feel necessary, but it should be changed at least twice a day. Some districts work through private concerns, listed in the yellow pages under telephone answering services, instead of the phone

company. When implementing this service, get a tape that will record a message at least 60 seconds in length; make sure it does not receive messages, just voices your message; make sure it's a new number, not one already being used; and put the phone someplace where the ringing will not bother anyone. It is recommended that you have one phone line for every 8,000 students. The lines tend to ring frequently. Some districts have one phone line for parents and another for employees. It's also a good idea to prepare a news release announcing the service and the phone number which you may distribute to the media in your area. Let parents know the number in letters mailed home. (Example of phone messages are on page 20.) This information also could be phoned to radio and television stations as soon as it's on the tape.

Writing News Releases

There are some sample releases provided in the appendix to this section which you may consider. But more and more we see that during strikes, districts will provide information to the media thru news conferences or interviews because of the media's desire to receive this information as quickly as possible. If the media are calling for information, a district will probably have less need to distribute news releases. If the media are not coming to the district then by all means consider sending news releases. Don't forget news releases on the start of negotiations. They lay firm foundations. (See page 24 for World's Shortest Course in Educational Journalism.)

Letters to Parents

This is another crucial aspect of a communications plan. Long before the strike hits a district should have on hand at least one set of mailing labels for every parent. As a strike approaches, have at least three sets on hand. The main points to cover in a letter to parents are: 1) the district's primary concern is to continue providing instructional opportunities for students, 2) the district will insure the welfare of the children attending school. Additionally, communicate to parents that all work completed by students during the strike will be counted, information on any lack of services such as transportation, and where they can obtain up-to-date information about the strike. It is also a good idea to let parents know that the district is recruiting substitute teachers and volunteers. Give them a phone number to call if they are interested in becoming involved. While it is a good idea to explain that the district will work to insure children's safety, do not over emphasize this. By mentioning the word safety 12 times in a letter to parents, a district may just create concerns that did not exist in the first place.

A district should certainly send a letter to parents the day before a strike or the first day of the strike. Remember, the earlier the better. These letters need to be mailed; do not rely on students to deliver them home. Throughout the strike consider sending letters when any major developments occur or when there's a need to reinforce messages. Also send home a letter when the strike is concluded to make sure parents know this fact and they encourage students to get back into school as quickly as possible.

Question and Answer Sheets

One of the most used communications vehicles employed in many districts has been the question and answer sheet. (See example on page 48.)

This document can identify the issues along with the Board's position. It can be distributed to parents, employees, students, community leaders, and the media. It also can be used by members of the Board as they respond to questions on the telephone.

Newspaper Ads or Open Letters to the Community

Some districts have employed ads in the newspapers to explain their position to the community. Other districts have been able to get their local newspaper to run an open letter to the community free of charge. Consider the implication running such an ad might have. The district may be trying to convince people that it is financially strapped. Will they question the use of money for newspaper advertising? It might be wise to forego this means of communications and emphasize other activities.

Setting Up a Communications Center

How can a district collect the accurate, up-to-date information people are going to demand during a strike? Probably the best means is to establish one communications center. All information comes through this center. Thus, the superintendent, negotiator, board member, district spokesperson, and media knows where accurate information can be obtained.

This center must be large enough to handle the necessary equipment and people. The district board room could a good locale.

If there is a strike coordinator, a person working with the schools and district personnel, have that individual in your communications center. The coordinator should have at least one phone with an unlisted number. That number is given only to members of the management team. The district's communications

professional or spokesperson, if other than superintendent, negotiator or personnel director, should be in the communications center. That person should have a direct phone line, and that number should be provided to the media. There should be at least one secretary in the center and probably more.

The central focus of the communications center is a large piece of butcher paper or blackboard where attendance figures for the day are listed. On one side of the blackboard the names of the schools are listed. Across the top are categories: Normal Attendance, Today's Attendance, Percentage of Normal Attendance, Normal Staff, Normal Staff Working Today, Percentage of Normal Staff Working Today, Number of Substitutes Working Today, Number of Volunteers Working Today.

Each school should be given multiple copies of a reporting form (page 15) which includes this information. Principals should be reminded that numerous media representatives will want this information. It will be easier for them to make one phone call to the communications center than to talk with seven reporters.

This information should be phoned to one or two secretaries in the communications center. They will record it on the blackboard. It provides the basis for daily public information reports unless major events occur, such as a settlement being reached. This information will be typed on a form in the afternoon, and the form can be made available to management team members. The communications pro should make comparisons from day to day if attendance improves.

One question a district will face is whether the media will be allowed in the communications center. If that would slow down the operations in the center, then don't. But consider allowing television camerapersons to stand just inside the door and film for a minute or two. That film should show how well prepared you are.

If the media are allowed in the communications center, and attendance is down, that will be very apparent. Of course, if attendance is high, that will also be apparent. The decision must be made by each district to allow or not allow the media in your communications center.

Setting Up A Media Room

The media will be arriving at the district office frequently, especially if news conferences are scheduled. The district should consider preparing a room for them where they can wait to see the spokesperson, make phone calls, and write stories. This room,

however, is by no means a holding cell until it's convenient for the spokesperson to speak with the media. Remember that it's imperative the district meets the media's needs as soon as possible. Otherwise, the media will simply talk to the union. So be sure that the communications person knows as soon as a reporter arrives. Greet the reporters. Give them background material to review, give them media packets. Tell them how soon you will have a statement.

The media room should have at least two telephones and two typewriters (manuals will do). Obviously, the exact equipment depends on how many reporters will be covering your district. Also have a coffee pot and cups there.

DAILY REPORTING FORM
(To be given to Principals)

Note: The district will consistently be asked to provide the following information. If you provide it to the communications center by 9:30 each morning, the district can report it to the media. You will not have to respond to each reporter.

PLEASE CALL 234-5678 BY 9:30 EACH MORNING OF THE STRIKE WITH YOUR BEST ESTIMATE OF THE FOLLOWING:

Number of Students Attending Today _____

*Number of Regular Certificated Staff Working Today _____

*Number of Substitute Teachers Working Today _____

Number of Volunteers Today _____

Any Incidents _____

_____

_____

_____

* These two items would be changed if the classified employees were striking. If both certificated and classified were striking, figures for both would have to be submitted.

CHECKLIST OF TASKS TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE FIRST DAY OF STRIKE

Have you

- ☐ developed a list of names, phone numbers, deadlines, and contact person of each newspaper, radio and television station read or heard in your district? Is that list up-to-date?
- ☐ made at least one contact with each of these media explaining your stance on the issues and how you will operate If a strike occurs?
- ☐ prepared Media Packets for Media which do not normally cover and may not have a basic understanding of your district?
- ☐ met with the reporters, editors, and/or news directors of your local media to provide them with a detailed understanding of the situation?
- ☐ designated a district spokesperson?
- ☐ decided how you will communicate with the media on a daily basis, through news conferences, news releases, only answering specific requests?
- ☐ discussed with principals and other members of the management team their role in the public information plan and in dealing with the media?
- ☐ informed all media of your public information plans, i.e.: news conferences?
- ☐ established a communications center or other means of collecting daily information from the schools?
- ☐ distributed Daily Reporting Forms to all principals?
- ☐ determined the normal attendance at each school?
- ☐ provided schools with written forms showing what information they will need to report each morning?
- ☐ installed a taped telephone message system and widely communicated the number?
- ☐ mailed home at least one letter to all parents in the district?

CHECKLIST OF TASKS TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE FIRST DAY OF STRIKE (cont'd)

Have you

- ☐ attached to envelopes a second set of mailing labels to parents so you can send a letter immediately? How long will it take you to have a third set ready?
- ☐ communicated the district's position to your staff?
- ☐ communicated to students, especially at the secondary level as to what will be expected of them? Do they know that all work completed during the strike will count toward grade advancement and graduation?
- ☐ talked with substitute teachers concerning assigning homework and having quizzes?
- ☐ set aside a room for the media with telephones and typewriters?
- ☐ Do all members of your governing board and management team understand what their roles are in communications and who will speak publicly for the district?

Typical Public Information Activities During One Day of a Strike. These are recommended duties for the district communications person.

5:30 - 5:45	--	Update and record taped phone message for that morning.
5:45 - 6:30	--	Phone morning report to all radio stations heard in your area.
6:30 - 6:45	--	Phone any television stations with morning news shows in your area.
7:00 - 8:00	--	Staff meetings, discussion with management team members on communication needs for the day.
8:00 - 10:30	--	Retire to communications center, collect morning information from schools on attendance and any unusual incidents, answer calls from media and other people.
10:30 - 11:00	--	Conduct morning news conference.
11:00 - noon	--	Respond to additional questions and needs of the media.
noon - 2:00	--	Meet with reporters from afternoon newspapers to make sure they have latest information. Verify with schools that morning attendance figures were accurate. Prepare new message for telephone tape reporting how things are going. Phone radio stations with report on situation that morning.
2:00 - 3:30	--	Handle any writing that needs to be done that day, i.e.: news releases, letters to parents, letters to students, memos to staff, community newsletters.
3:30 - 4:00	--	Read afternoon newspapers. Gracefully discuss with reporters any "problems" district has with coverage.
4:00 - 5:00	--	Attend principals meeting. Be responsive to any public information problems they might have had during the day.
5:00 - 6:00	--	Check with reporter of morning newspapers to make sure he/she has up-to-date information. Phone radio stations with up-dated taped phone message, stressing what's ahead for tomorrow.

6:00 - whenever -- Be available for governing board meeting to advise board members and become knowledgeable of any new positions or strategies. It's also a good idea to have someone assigned to watch the television stations news shows. If you have "concerns" with the coverage, phone the reporter and gracefully discuss it with him or her.

SAMPLE 1 - Before Strike Phone Tape Message

This is the Sunnyside Union School District Information line, Monday morning, September 3rd. Schools will be open on Friday, September 7th, in the event of a work stoppage. Sunnyside Union School District officials and leaders of the Sunnyside Education Association are meeting daily in efforts to avert a threatened strike. Proceedings are conducted under the direction of John Brown, state mediator.

District officials have announced that if a settlement has not been reached by the Thursday evening strike deadline, schools will be open on Friday morning. All class, bus and cafeteria schedules will be in operation as usual.

Classrooms will be staffed by qualified teachers. In accordance with Board of Education policies, all grading and homework procedures will be in effect.

Negotiations will continue until a final settlement is reached.

Please continue to call this number for up-to-date, accurate information 24 hours a day.

SAMPLE 2 - First Morning of Strike Phone Tape Message

This is the Sunnyside Union School District Information line, Friday morning, September 7th. Schools will operate this morning although leaders of the Sunnyside Education Association have called a strike. All schools in the district are open and operating with qualified teachers in the classrooms. The schools will provide as normal an instructional program as possible and all work completed by students will be counted.

Parents are urged to send students to their school. All services, including transportation and food, will continue.

Schools are looking for college graduates to teach and for volunteers. If you are interested in helping your principal, please phone your school.

Please continue to call this number for up-to-date, accurate information 24 hours a day.

SAMPLE 3 - Typical Morning Phone Tape Message

This is the Sunnyside Union School District Information line, Monday morning, September 10th. Schools will be open today as the district enters the second day of a strike by the Sunnyside Education Association. All classrooms are staffed with qualified teachers. Instructional programs continue to be provided. All student work completed during this period will be counted.

The school board's main interest continues to be the educational welfare of the students. Yesterday 80 percent of the students attended classes. Parents are urged to send their students to school.

All normal transportation and food services continue to be provided.

Please continue to call this number for up-to-date, accurate information 24 hours a day.

SAMPLE 4 - Typical Early Afternoon Phone Tape Message

This is the Sunnyside Union School District Information line, Monday afternoon, September 10th. All schools held classes this morning. Approximately 85 percent of the students attended, an increase of 5 percent from yesterday.

All classrooms were staffed with qualified teachers. Approximately 7 percent of the regular teaching staff were in their classrooms. This is an increase of 2 percent from yesterday. Instructional programs continued to be provided, and all student work is being counted.

All support services were provided in normal fashion this morning.

Representatives of the Board of Education and the teachers union continue to meet.

Please continue to call this number for up-to-date, accurate information 24 hours a day.

SAMPLE 5 - Typical Evening Phone Tape Message

This is the Sunnyside Union School District Information line, Monday evening, September 10th. Schools will again be open tomorrow as the teacher union strike enters its third day.

Qualified teachers will be continuing the educational program in all classrooms. All normal transportation and food services will be provided.

This morning 85 percent of the students attended classes. Normally there is 95 percent attendance. All student work completed today was recorded and will be counted. Parents are urged to send their students to school.

Representatives of the Board of Education and the teachers union continue to negotiate attempting to settle this dispute as quickly as possible.

Please continue to call this number for up-to-date, accurate information 24 hours a day.

SAMPLE 6 - End of Strike Phone Tape Message

This is the Sunnyside Union School District Information line, Wednesday afternoon, September 12th. Representatives of the Board of Education and the teachers union have reached tentative agreement settling the four-day strike.

All regular teachers are expected to report to their classrooms tomorrow. Parents are encouraged to send their students to school.

The tentative agreement calls for a five percent salary increase and continued health and welfare benefits. Teachers will vote to ratify the agreement tonight, while the Board of Education has scheduled a special meeting tomorrow night for ratification.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASES

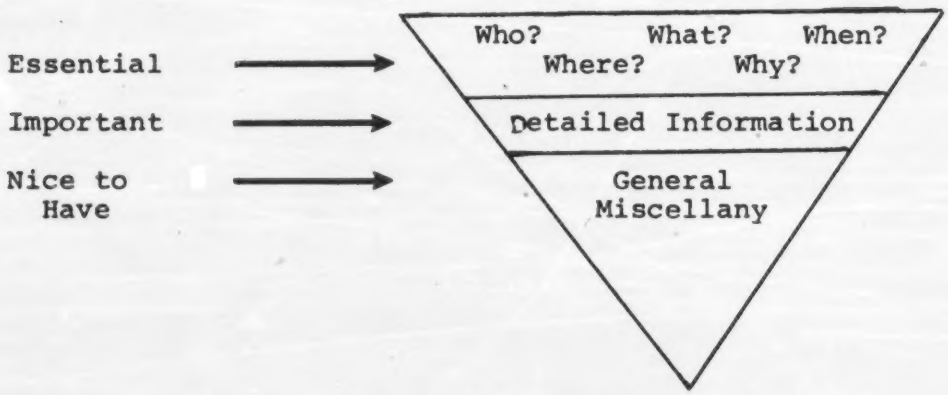
Following are some sample news releases and a short guide on writing news releases for a district's consideration. Please evaluate your specific situation before using any of these. You may want to use parts of some releases or decide not to use some at all. These are meant only as examples of what to consider. Be sure to check strategy with the district negotiator on appropriate releases. These samples are singled-spaced to decrease printing costs. News releases for the media should always be double-spaced.

Once again, these are not meant to be torn from this book and handed to a reporter. Evaluate all the words carefully and decide what best meets your needs.

THE WORLD'S SHORTEST COURSE IN EDUCATIONAL JOURNALISM

1. Type your story on one side of the paper only, using 8 1/2 x 11" paper.
2. Double space.
3. Leave the top third of the first page blank, except for source information.
4. Source information should be at the top left corner of the first page and should include:
   a) The full name and address or your organization (school), the writer's name, a telephone number (night and day if necessary) where the writer can be reached.
5. End each page with a compelete paragraph.
6. Make it short. If a second page is necessary, always indicate "MORE" at the bottom of the first page.
7. Use any of the following marks to indicate the end of the story:
   ### -30- XXX ***
8. Leave generous margins all around.
9. Consider the deadlines of the local press when planning and writing your story. Get the story in as far in advance as possible.
10. Send the news to your local reporter, by name.
11. Always use first and last names, and completely identify every person mentioned.
12. Go easy on the adjectives.
13. Use short words, short sentences, short paragraphs.
14. If you don't see your story in print when you expect it, ONE follow-up call to the reporter is acceptable. Find out why it didn't run. You may learn something that will help you next time.

When editors cut a story because of space limits, they begin at the bottom of your story. The following is an example of the order your story should follow:



Developed by Gayle Wayne, Ocean View Elementary School District

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE FOR START OF NEGOTIATIONS

Sunnyside Union School District
May 4, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

The Sunnyside Education Association (SEA), exclusive representative for the 200 teachers in the Sunnyside Union School District, last night (May 3) presented its initial proposal for a new contract to the Sunnyside Board of Education.

Members of the public are invited to express their views regarding the SEA proposal during the board meeting scheduled for May 10 at 7:30 p.m. in the district office, 123 Sunshine Ave. Copies of the proposal may be reviewed at the distrcit office between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The teachers union proposal included a request for 15 per cent cost of living increase on the salary schedule, lower class size, and improvements to the health and welfare benefits, among other items.

The public will also be able to express its views on the initial proposal from the board during another meeting. The time and place will be announced later. Under provisions of the Rodda Act, the collective bargaining law for public schools, both sides present initial offers and the public has an opportunity to express its views before actual negotiations begin.

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE TO ANNOUNCE PUBLIC HEARING ON INITIAL PROPOSALS

Sunnyside Union School District
May 8, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

Members of the Sunnyside Union School District community will have a chance to express their views on the initial proposal of the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA) at a public hearing May 10 at 7:30 p.m.

The Sunnyside Board of Education called the meeting for 7:30 p.m. in the school district office, 123 Sunshine Ave.

The SEA presented its first proposal May 3. It included a request for a cost of living increase totaling 15 per cent, lower class size, and increased health and welfare benefits. Copies of the complete proposal are available at the district office between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

"We estimate the total package presented by the SEA would cost the school district $1.5 million," said Charlie Brown, district spokesperson. "The board will listen to comments any member of the community wishes to make on that proposal during this hearing."

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE ON BOARD'S INITIAL PROPOSAL

Sunnyside Union School District
May 24, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

The Sunnyside Union School District Board of Education last night (May 23) announced its initial proposal for a new contract for the 200 district teachers.

Under provisions of the Rodda Act, the collective bargaining law for public school employees, both the board of education and the exclusive representation of the employees make initial proposals. The Sunnyside Education Association (SEA), representing the teachers, made its first proposal May 3.

The board has scheduled a public hearing for May 30 to receive comments from the community on its initial proposal. The meeting will start at 7:30 p.m. in the school district office, 123 Sunshine Ave. Copies of the proposal are available at the district office between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The board's initial offer includes a one percent cost of living increase to the salary schedule, maintenance of the longevity and advance education increments on the salary schedule, and coverage of the increased costs to the present health and welfare program.

"The board of education's representatives are ready to negotiate in good faith with the exclusive representative of the teachers," said Charlie Brown, district spokesperson. "We will present a fair offer in light of the budget the district has this year and our commitments to other programs."

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE ON FIRST NEGOTIATING SESSION

Sunnyside Union School District
June 5, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

Talks on a new contract started last night (June 4) between representatives of the Sunnyside Board of Education and the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA).

The four-hour meeting was the first after both groups had publicly presented their initial proposals and the community was given a chance to express its views on them during public hearings.

"Under the collective bargaining process we expect to hold numerous meetings as both sides work toward a settlement which is acceptable to both parties," indicated Charlie Brown, district spokesperson. "The board of education has instructed its representatives to negotiate in good faith to reach a mutually acceptable agreement."

The next negotiating session has been scheduled for June 10.

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE ON SOME PROGRESS

Sunnyside Union School District
June 22, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

After meeting for approximately 16 hours, negotiators have reached three tentative agreements on a new contract for the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA).

Bargaining began June 4 between representatives of the Sunnyside Board of Education and the SEA, exclusive representative of the teachers.

Tentative agreements have been reached on a leave policy, safety conditions, and a grievance procedure.

"It is our hope negotiations will continue until both sides reach a mutually acceptable agreement," said Charlie Brown, district spokesperson. "The major issues are salary and health benefits."

The next negotiating session is scheduled for June 25.

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE ON IMPASSE

Sunnyside Union School District
July 1, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

Impasse has been declared in negotiations between representatives of the Sunnyside Board of Education and the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA).

After holding 10 negotiation sessions which lasted for approximately 60 hours, both sides declared impasse last night (June 30) saying they could not reach agreement on economic issues. This paves the way for a neutral party to help both sides reach a mutually-acceptable settlement.

Negotiators representing the Sunnyside Board of Education and the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA) had reached tentative agreements on a number of issues including school calendar, leave policy, safety conditions, a grievance policy, and class size.

"At this point the school board is ready to take the next step outlined in the Rodda Act," said Charlie Brown, district spokesperson. "The law calls for mediation with a neutral party. We want to try all possible ways to reach agreement."

The teachers union's latest salary proposal was for 12 per cent cost of living increase on the salary schedule. The district countered with four per cent.

"If the district accepted the total package the union had last placed on the table, it would cost us $1 million," Brown said. "The salary schedule and fringe benefits offered by the board are very comparable to those in neighboring districts. The board has made a fair offer considering its other responsibilities to the students, parents, and taxpayers."

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE ON MEDIATION

Sunnyside Union School District
July 3, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

The Sunnyside Union School District Board of Education and the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA) have requested the assistance of a state mediator from the Educational Employment Relations Board (EERB) in an effort to reach agreement on a new contract for the (date) school year.

"Negotiating sessions have reached a point where no progress is being made, and the school board's negotiating team wants to make every effort to get talks moving ggain," said Charlie Brown, district spokesperson.

Mediation is a process designed to help the parties reach agreement after an impasse has been determined. The mediator, an impartial third party, works with both parties seeking areas of compromise to effect a settlement. Although the mediator has no power to force agreement between the two sides, he/she helps to clarify the issues and explores with each party methods of settlement.

TYPICAL MEDIATION NEWS RELEASE

Sunnyside Union School District
July 7, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

Joe Kennedy has been named as the mediator in the Sunnyside Union School District as attempts continue to settle on a new contract with the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA).

Kennedy was appointed by the Educational Employment Relations Board (EERB) and will meet with representatives of the Sunnyside Board of Education and the SEA. The first session has been set for July 15.

"We hope that bringing in a neutral party will help us reach agreement on the economic issues," said Chariie Brown, district spokesperson. "We have already reached tentative agreements on many non-economic matters."

Under the Rodda Act, the collective bargaining law for public schools, once both parties declare impasse a state mediator can be brought into the district. He will work with the parties for at least 15 days. After that point he may declare an impasse if he feels progress can not be made, continue mediation if he feels there is a possibility of progress, or recommend factfinding.

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE ON END OF MEDIATION

Sunnyside Union School District
July 31, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

Joe Kennedy, state mediator working with the Sunnyside Union School District, has recommended that a factfinding panel be called into the district.

Kennedy, who had met with representatives of the Sunnyside Board of Education and the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA), said yesterday (July 30) that there were unresolvable disagreements over the facts. He specifically indicated that there were concerns over how much money was available for employee salaries and benefits.

Factfinding is a semi-judicial process with the panel hearing arguments from both sides in support of their individual positions. Exhibits and substantiating materials are presented by both sides, and the proceedings are recorded for study.

"The Board has presented a fair offer to the teachers union while still being fiscally responsible with the district budget," said Charlie Brown, district spokesperson. "We would welcome a factfinding study of the financial condition of this district.

"The Board must also remember the students, parents, and taxpayers. We can not meet the union's demands without making serious cuts in the instructional program."

Brown indicated that the total package last demanded by the union would cost the district $1 million.

"We would welcome factfinding," he said. "The board wants to employ all possible solutions to this dispute."

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE ON BOARD'S LATEST OFFER

Sunnyside Union School District
August 1, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

The board of education of the Sunnyside Union School District has offered the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA) a contract for the 1976/77 school year that would total three-quarters of a million dollars.

The latest offer made by the board to the SEA, exclusive representative for the 200 district teachers includes a 4 per cent increase on the salary schedule, meeting the increased costs of the present health and welfare program, maintenance of the growth steps on the salary schedule for longevity and advanced education, among other items.

"This is a very fair offer to the employees," said Charlie Brown, district spokesperson. "It would mean that the average teacher salary in this district would be $19,000 or approximately $1,900 a month for the school year."

Brown indicated that the proposed salary schedule offered by the school board is very comparable to salaries in neighboring school districts.

"Our average teacher salary is the second best among the 10 elementary school districts in this county," he explained. "This is the best the board can do while still being fair with classified employees, students and the taxpayers."

Brown explained that the union is demanding a 12 per cent increase on the salary schedule, and agency shop, whereby all teachers in the district would be required to be a member of the SEA or pay a service fee to the SEA.

"The district financial condition will not allow such a settlement without severly hampering the instructional program," he said. "Last year the district was forced to eliminate art classes and some bus transportation.

"While the board wants to be fair with employees, it does not want to hamper instruction," Brown said.

Brown also indicated that if the union calls for a work slowdown, the district will continue a quality instructional program with substitute teachers in the classrooms.

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE ON INSTALLATION OF HOTLINE

Sunnyside Union School District
August 2, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

The Sunnyside Union School District is committed to providing the community, and especially parents, with accurate, up-to-date information during the current contract dispute, according to Charlie Brown, district spokesperson.

"We have installed a recorded telephone message in the district office which will have up-to-date information," Brown said. "Parents will be able to call and listen to that message 24 hours a day."

The telephone number is 123-4567.

TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE ON STRIKE

Sunnyside Union School District
August 5, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

Schools will be open tomorrow with qualified teachers in the classrooms as a teacher strike enters its first day in the Sunnyside Union School District.

Talks have broken off between the Sunnyside Board of Education and the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA) over a contract for the 200 district teachers. Both mediation and factfinding failed to bring about a settlement.

"The board of education is committed to maintaining a quality education program for our 5,000 students," said Charlie Brown, district spokesperson. "We will attempt to have qualified substitute teachers in all classrooms tomorrow. If the strike continues the district will improve its operation on a daily basis."

Schools will operate on a minimal schedule tomorrow with classes starting at 9 a.m. and running until 12:20 p.m. Brown emphasized that all student work completed during this time will count toward graduation or grade advancement.

The latest offer made by the board to the SEA, exclusive representative for the 200 district teachers, includes a 4 per cent increase on the salary schedule, meeting of the increased costs of the present health and welfare schedule for longevity and advanced education, among other items.

"This is a very fair offer to the employees," said Charlie Brown, district spokesperson. "It would mean that the average teacher salary in this district would be $19,000 or $1,900 a month for the 10-month school year."

Brown indicated that the proposed salary schedule offered by the school board is very comparable to salaries in neighboring school districts.

"Our average teacher salary is the second best among the 10 elementary school districts in this county," he explained. "This is the best the board can do while still being fair with classified employees, students and the taxpayers."

Brown explained that the union is demanding a 12 per cent increase on the salary schedule. He encouraged parents to phone the district information line, 123-4567, for accurate, up-to-date information 24 hours a day.

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TYPICAL NEWS RELEASE ON SETTLEMENT

Sunnyside Union School District
August 10, 1977
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information
call Charlie Brown,
765-4321

A tentative agreement on a contract for the 200 teachers in the Sunnyside Union School District was reached last night ending the four-day strike.

The agreement was the culmination of several weeks of intensive negotiations during which both sides spent many hours to arrive at a fair and equitable settlement. These weeks of negotiations were preceded by many months during which the collective bargaining procedure was tried and tested for the first time by the board of education and the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA). The final outcome of this district's initial experience with collective bargaining resulted in a contract, the major features of which are as follows:

** A 4% raise for the present year.
** 5% for next year (1977/78).
** 5% for fiscal year 1978/79.
** 54% of all new monies for insurance and/or salary.
** Continuation of the $1,286 per employee for insurance benefits.
** A 3-year contract: July 1, 1976 - June 20, 1979.
** A "no reprisal" settlement.

Both the representatives of the SEA and the board of education greeted the conclusion of their efforts with a sense of satisfaction that a long and arduous task has been completed and that everyone could now devote his/her entire energy and attention to the education of the students in the Sunnyside Union School District.

TYPICAL LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents:

As you have likely heard by now, the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA) has called upon its members to wtthdraw services to the district. The board of education has made an honest effort to be fair to the employees. The board has offered the SEA a four per cent salary package. With other fringe benefits including the increased costs of health insurance as well as mandated costs, the district's total offer is more than nine per cent.

The board of education feels that it has made a very fair offer and that is the best it can do considering the other demands upon the district's budget. The board will not cut into the budget to an extent that will force it to damage the instructional programs for students.

The board is committed to keeping the schools operating and to continue providing a quality program for the district's 9,000 students. Your help is requested. Please encourage your youngsters to attend their normal classes. There will be qualified teachers in the classrooms. They will receive meaningful instruction. Please have them bring a bag lunch and beverage to school.* Please organize car pools when necessary. All the work students do during this period will be counted toward graduation or grade advancement at the end of the year.

It is hoped that this withdrawal of services to the district will be brief. The board is confident that the majority of the employees in this district will soon be back working with the students. If you have any questions, please phone 123-4567 to receive an accurate, up-to-date message available 24 hours a day.

In order to keep your schools operating at full efficiency, many of your friends and neighbors have volunteered to help. If you will help at a school, please phone 223-4567, Extension 30 or 35, or phone your school principal.

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* To be used only if food services were affected by the strike.

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TYPICAL COMMUNICATION TO EMPLOYEES DURING NEGOTIATIONS

Dear Staff Member:

The Sunnyside Board of Education has always and will continue to care for all those who are a part of the Sunnyside Union School District. That includes students, teachers, classified employees and administrators. The board, as the elected representative of the public, is also concerned about parents, taxpayers and our other publics in Sunnyside.

While operating under the new collective bargaining law, the board is committed to fair treatment for all employees. The board has instructed its negotiating team to work as quickly as possible to reach a contract settlement. These instructions were given when the board made its response to the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA) proposal last June.

Let's take a look at what has happened since.

1. Representatives of the board and the SEA have met for approximately 60 hours in an attempt to reach agreement.

2. The agenda for each session is developed mutually. The SEA bargaining team can speak to any item it desires.

3. Both sides are near tentative agreements on safety and on evaluation procedures. Additionally, some tentative agreements have been reached collectively.

4. A tentative contract has been reached with Chapter 123, California School Employees Association, representing the Sunnyside classified employees. Formal contractual language is now being written and then both the classified employees and the board will vote to ratify.

5. In the absence of a contract the board directed that the same base salaries in effect during the 1976/77 school year be continued until such time as salaries and fringe benefits were negotiated. Monies budgeted for experience and training increments were placed in the appropriate accounts

and are available for use. In developing a total salary and fringe benefit package, that money is available for whatever use is agreed upon in the negotiating process, i.e. salary, health and welfare benefits, et cetera.

The board has instructed its representatives to deal with all issues which fall within the scope of the collective bargaining law (the bill specifies that the scope of representation is limited to wages, hours of employment, specified health and welfare benefits, leave and transfer policies, safety conditions of employment, class size, employee evaluation procedures, and grievance processing procedures). The board's team is ready and willing to meet, and to work toward a contract settlement as quickly as possible.

(Signed by all board members)

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TYPICAL MEMO TO STUDENTS

TO: The Students of the Sunnyside Union School District

I am writing to you to let you know that I, too, am concerned that many of the regular teachers of your school are not in the classroom. I ask your cooperation with the teacher who is in the classroom in continuing the work you started this year.

You should understand that any work you do <u>will be</u> counted toward grades and credit for the year. Again, thank you for your effort in continuing <u>your</u> education.

Superintendent

TYPICAL OPEN LETTER TO COMMUNITY

OPEN LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY
From the Sunnyside Union School District Board of Education

Your board of education wants to take this opportunity to inform you of the current labor situation in our schools. Unfortunately the Sunnyside Education Association (SEA) has decided to call a strike. The representatives of the board have negotiated with the union of the teachers for many long hours. The board continues to keep in mind our responsibility to you to be sound business-like managers and to provide a good learning experience for our young people. Through our representatives, we have offered the union a good package. It is fair from all reasonable viewpoints. This last offer would have cost the district more than a 9 per cent total increase in expenditures. In brief form this offer included:

1.	A salary increase.	4.00%
2.	Compensatory time off for three holidays granted teachers in 1975/76.	2.37%
3.	Restoration of Christmas Eve holiday	
4.	Longevity service increase	.46%
5.	Increased costs of health and dental plan	1.35%
6.	Increased related costs tied to this salary offer, i.e., retirement, Workmen's Compensation, unemployment in surance premiums.	1.00%
		9.00%

We have offered the best salary and benefit package we could while still being fiscally responsible with the community's tax dollars.

What can you do? Please encourage your students to attend their normal classes. We will run the best educational program we can. All student work will be graded and will count. With your help and understanding, we can keep education continuing and still be responsible with your tax dollars.

Thank you for allowing us this opportunity.

(Signed by all board members)

TYPICAL LETTER TO EMPLOYEES BEFORE ANTICIPATED STRIKE

Dear Staff Member:

The administration and the board of education have been informed that there is the possibility that some of the teachers in our school district will engage in a walkout, strike, or other form of work stoppage within the next few days. It is, of course, our sincere hope that this will not occur.

In addition to the extremely detrimental effects that a strike will have upon the students and upon the educational system generally, which should be our primary concern, there can be serious adverse consequences to a teacher who participates in such a work stoppage or strike.

This letter and notice is intended to inform you of your responsibilities and duties should such an event occur.

Strikes:

1. Despite what you have heard recently, strikes engaged in by public employees in the State of California are illegal and have been so declared by California Appellate courts on at least four occasions during the past seven years. See, California Federation of Teachers v. Oxnard Elementary School. (1969), 272 Cal App. 2d 514; City of San Diego v. American Federation of State, etc. Employees (1970), 8 Cal App. 3d 308; Los Angeles Unified School District v. United Teachers (1972), 24 Cal App. 3d 142. It should be noted that three of these cases specifically involved school teachers.

2. The Attorney General of California has specifically stated that "strikes by public employees are against the law unless authorized by statute." 59 OPS. Atty. Gen. p. 200 (1976). The Rodda Act, like its predecessor the Winton Act, contains no provisions legalizing such strikes. In fact the present statute does not even mention the word strike, the mechanism of factfinding being substituted by the Legislature in lieu of authorized strikes by public school employees.

3. In cases where teachers have struck during the last year (since the enactment of the Rodda Act), Superior Courts in California have consistently declared that such strikes are unlawful and have enjoined

the teachers and their respective union from continuing said strike.

4. A teacher may be discharged for participating in an illegal strike. There is no statute, regulation or case decision in California which restricts the number of strikers that may be replaced or the manner in which the replacements can be instituted. Loss of salary, fringe benefits, including medical, hospitalization, and life insurance, are also benefits that may be lost during a strike.

5. Tenured teachers and those who are members of the State Retirement System should be concerned with the effect of a break in service. Time and pay lost during a strike or work stoppage could affect retirement status.

Factfinding:

1. On Wednesday, May 4, 1977 at 10:00 a.m. at the district offices, a factfinding panel will commence its hearing.

2. Factfinding is the last statutorily designed step to facilitate bringing the parties together on unresolved issues. A panel of three individuals, one selected by the association, one selected by the district, and one member appointed by the Educational Employment Relations Board meet to consider the proposals of each side and to make recommendations respecting the same. This process will continue until each side has had a complete opportunity to present its views with respect to each issue outstanding. By statute the procedure can not last longer than 30 days, unless both parties agree to another thirty-day extension. At the conclusion of factfinding, the panel makes its recommendation. The panel's recommendation and finding of fact must be made public.

Negotiations:

On Sunday and Monday, negotiators for both the district and the SEA met. The district's negotiating team is prepared to meet throughout the factfinding process in an attempt to achieve a settlement prior to completion of factfinding. The district's team will continue to operate in good faith.

Board Policies:

1. In the event that a teacher supports a strike by not reporting for duty, each teacher must provide a copy of his/her lesson plans as required in Board Policy 1234, Section 1.,a. The teacher's grade book, which is a legal district document, must also be available for use by the substitute teacher. Teachers who do not provide lesson plans and grade books for substitute teachers will be in violation of Board Policy and the Education Code and will be held responsible for such violations by the district.

2. You are further advised that the Emergency Powers adopted by the board on September 1, 1976 are still in full force and effect. Any employee absent from duty because of illness may be required to submit certification from a medical doctor to authenticate such illness. Should such certification be required, the district will be unable to authorize salary payment for such days of absence without medical authorization.

The above points are intended to provide you with an overview of the legal and personal considerations that each employee of the district should analyze at this time.

The board of education and the administration respectfully request that all certificated personnel continue to perform their duties without interruption during these final stages of negotiations and the factfinding process. We are encouraged by the prospect of a settlement, and hope that whatever issues remain open as of this date can be resolved by the factfinding panel.

Sincerely yours,

Board of Education Superintendent

TYPICAL QUESTION AND ANSWER SHEET

SUNNYSIDE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Q. What salary package has been offered to the Sunnyside Education Association by the Board of Education?

A. The Board has offered a salary and benefit package that totals a 9.0 percent increase. The total package offered by the District would cost $900,000.

Q. What are some of the areas still under negotiation?

A. Compensation, fringe benefits, class size, holidays, longevity plan, and amnesty.

Q. Does the District have $2 million that it can offer as salaries to teachers?

A. No. What the Board has offered will cost the District $900,000. If more money were offered in salaries, it would have to come through reducing instructional programs and other high priority areas.

Q. What is the average teacher salary in the District?

A. The average teacher salary this past year was $19,000 or approximately $1,900 a month for the school year.

Q. How does the District spend its money?

A. Last year, the budget looked like this:

87% -- salaries and fringe benefits
6.8% -- operating expenses and utilities
3.2% -- books and supplies
1.7% -- capital outlay
1.1% -- appropriation for contingencies
.2% -- outgoing tuition

For accurate up-to-date information

CALL

223-4567

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TYPICAL PRESS PACKET

The following are suggested items to include in a press packet developed for the media which cover the district during a strike. In addition to the materials developed specifically for the packet, consider including a budget pie for the district, the telephone tape message for the first morning ofthe strike, any news releases issued thus far concerning the negotiations process, letters to parents, and letters to employees.

Direct Outside Line: (408) 737-2151 (Information Line)

Official District Spokesperson: Charlie Brown (408) 736-4981
Public Information Officer

Facts and Figures About the District

12 schools

10 - K-6

2 - 7-8 intermediate schools

Enrollment: 5,945 (enrollment declining at a 5% annual rate: the district is losing about 450 students per year)

Staff: 200 certificated members, including teachers, counselors, psychologists and nurses. Administrators: 26, including principals and district office personnel. 265 classified staff members.

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Statement by Superintendent:

"We are very disappointed that actions have been taken by the Sunnyside Education Association to withdraw services. This comes before we have even gone through the mediation process as provided by law. The board offered to go through mediation with an impartial third party, but the association refused to do so."

"It is the Board of Education's and my intention to assure that our students receive continuing educational opportunities in the coming days. All students work will be counted toward graduation. We will have qualified teachers in our classrooms and volunteers helping with non-teaching duties."

"The Board of Education asks all parents to encourage their students to attend classes. It's important that they receive the legally mandated number of days of instruction so they can graduate to the next grade at the end of the year. Parents are also asked to have their young eeople bring bag lunches when necessary. We will strike to maintain the normal operation of the school day."

"The Sunnyside Union School District has attempted to provide the best salary and fringe benefit package we could for the employees this year. But we too, as may other school districts in California, are being drained by education's financial structure."

"We believe that we have made our employees a fair offer and are sorry that the union leadership has promoted this withdrawal of services. This district is committed to maintain educational programs of quality for our students in the days ahead."

The total package offered by the board would have cost the district approximately 9%. The district was ready to agree to:

1.	Salary	4.00%
2.	Compensatory time off for three holidays granted teachers in 1975/76	2.37%
3.	Restoration of Christmas Eve holiday	
4.	Longevity increase	.46%
5.	Increased costs of health and dental plan	1.35%
6.	Increased related costs tied to this salary offer, i.e., retirement, Workmen's Compensation	1.00%
		9.00%

THE NEGOTIATIONS BACKGROUND

The district has offered:

1. 4% salary increase.
2. A longevity pay plan for employees who have more than 10 years of service to the district. The plan would provide $200 annually until retirement or resignation.
3. Restoration of a holiday.
4. Compensatory time off for three board-approved holidays awarded to teachers in 1975/76.

SEA is demanding:

1. 12% salary increase.
2. Restoration of a holiday.
3. Compensatory time off for three board-approved holidays awarded to teachers in 1975/76.
4. A longevity pay plan for employees who have served more than 10 years. The plan would provide $360 annually until retirement or resignation.
5. Amnesty for all employees participating in withdrawal of services.

There has been negotiations sessions between representatives of the Board of Education and the SEA. These sessions have totaled approximately 60 hours. Negotiations started on June 30.